

The Modern Warfare
and
My Experiences
in France

by

Obadiah M. Foster



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FOREWORD

Is life beset with struggle?
Is life beset with grief?
Where shall we look for succor?
Where shall we find relief?

While some are always grumbling,
Others do the best they can:
Why not strive to do your duty?
Be a man.

If troubles come upon you
When you've done the best you can,
Do not whimper like a baby,
Be a man.

Take heart, discouraged brother,
Your daily aim should be
That when your toils and cares shall end
You live eternally!

THE MODERN WARFARE AND MY EXPERIENCES IN FRANCE

By Obadiah M. Foster

I am going to inform you about the trip I had to France. After I was mustered into the service of the United States Army, I was sent to Camp Sherman, Ohio, to train for oversea service.

I left Camp Sherman April the 12th, 1918, over the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad with two hundred and twelve other soldiers who had volunteered to go to France to fight to make the World Safe for Democracy. I went to Camp Merritt, New Jersey, which is a debarkation Camp for oversea soldiers. *etc*

I stayed one week to receive the necessary equipment for service. After I had been fitted up I left Camp Merritt on the morning of April 22nd, 1918, for France. I stayed in port at Hoboken, New Jersey, all that day, night and the next day until 5 p. m. At that time I moved out of the harbor to sail for France. The weather was very fair. I had a fourteen days' voyage to France.

During the trip we had some stormy weather, and I became seasick several times, but finally I overcame it before I reached France, May 6th, 1918. After I had got ashore I got in a truck and was carried to Napoleon Barracks. This was a rest camp in Brest, France, for the oversea soldiers from America.

I left there the next week on the train for Maffrecourt, France, where we joined the "Old Fighting Fifteenth Regiment" of New York, which is known as the 369th U. S. Infantry, of New York. After I had joined them I was attached to the Third Battalion of this regiment for duty. I was Acting Liaison Sergeant for this battalion. This liaison work is a French stunt. We had a French Cor-

poral from the One Hundred and Sixty-third Division, to which we were attached, who gave me information about this kind of work. I had thirty or forty men under my charge for whom I was responsible during the war. The work of these men was to carry messages to the four companies of this battalion, namely, L Company, K Company, M Company and the Machine Gun Company.

During my stay with the battalion I was in the Argonne Forest and the Champagne fronts. On the morning of the drive, September 26, 1918, on the Champagne front I was gassed. I was in the drive six days and was gassed four times; but I was not too weak to go to the rear for treatment. But the hospitals were crowded and I only got a ten days' rest and a few pills to take.

I was up in the Alsace-Lorraine section when the Armistice was signed. One thing I noticed about the way the French soldiers fought was this: they fought to save men as well as win the war, and I considered that as a piece of strategic work.

We were fighting in the Northern section of France. In this section a great deal of farming was carried on, the soil being very rich. The things that were raised in this section are: white potatoes, beans, turnips, cabbage, kale and sugar beets. I was informed that in the Southern part of France the people had large vineyards.

On our trip through the North Central part of France we saw some of these vineyards. Quite a number of the people in this section lived in caves and were called "Cave Dwellers."

I had read about the "Cave Dwellers" in history, but I never did think I should have the pleasure of seeing them. Before we had reached the Alsace-Lorraine the most part of France was very hilly. On the slope of these hills there were small towns. The town where we had our rest camp, called "Maffrecourt," was on the slope of a hill. Also there were quite a number of towns located in valleys. These towns were visited quite often by shells that were thrown from the German Artillery.

Our trip to the Alsace-Lorraine we were carried in trucks over the Alps. On the winding roads around the Alps we went through many villages where the Dutch people lived. It was one of the most beautiful scenes one would want to see. We could look down into the valleys and see small villages, towns and railroads.

After we had reached our destination which was called Meuse, we stayed there one-half a day and night. Early the next morning the Third Battalion went up into the sector which had been occupied by the German soldiers.

After being attached to the Third Battalion for duty, I had to go out to the Argonne Forest. There we stayed twenty days. When the twenty days had expired, I went to the rest camp at La Charmeresse. After I left there I went to Melziecourt and stayed there three days. Then I went to Maffrecourt on the morning of July 4th, 1918. From this place I went to the trenches again. On the night of the 14th of July, 1918, which is the French holiday, the Germans attacked the French. They attempted to make a drive and break through the French line and come into Paris. The French soldiers

held their ground, also the American troops, and drove the Germans back twelve miles and took about 120,000 prisoners.

The soldiers were between the ages of nineteen and twenty-one years old. They said they were glad to give up to their comrades, because they were hungry and they wanted something to eat. We were just behind the French troops; in case they should retreat we would reenforce them. But the French and the American soldiers were still advancing every day until we had captured the "Kaiser" and whipped Germany.

This war was fought with observation balloons, aeroplanes, artillery, machine guns, trench motor rifles, carbines and hand grenades. On the night of July 14th, 1918, five American soldiers of the 369th U. S. Infantry were killed by shells and several were wounded. Afterwards on July 16, 1918, we had two soldiers killed.

Quite a number of our men were gassed. In most cases I think they will recover.

THE MODERN WARFARE.

The first thing in the morning,
And the last thing at night,
Is the roaring of the artillery,
Its constant music seems to be roaring in our ears,
Every night when we lie down to sleep,

When we start about the boys begin to shout
About that whistling sound overhead;
Sometimes it's "Boche" and sometimes it's French, by gosh,
Throwing those awful gas shells.
Wherever they hit they kill soldiers, lice and nits
That are within their reach.

But still we move on, listening overhead
For shells and aeroplanes;
Our two heroes, Johnson and Roberts,
Out on "No Man's Land" go,
Hunting for boche, you know.

Johnson killed a few boches and saved his comrade Robert;
From being captured by boche soldiers;
But the people at home don't know like Johnson and Roberts know.
Who have been fighting in Modern Warfare.

We say our prayers and ask for aid
From the people at home we know.
For God knows like the boys know that have been fighting in Modern
Warfare,

We throw hand grenades when we get in close range of the enemy's
trench.
Because we know if we don't throw, the enemy would throw at us so.
But God only knows, like the boys know who have been fighting in
Modern Warfare.

On September 26, 1918, the open warfare started. That same day on "No Man's Land" I was gassed very badly, but I continued to move on. Our first day we lost over half of K Company. Several men were gassed and wounded. Quite a number of officers were killed that morning.

We went over several hills and captured a number of prisoners, machine guns, and large artillery guns and plenty of ammunition. Our Major and Acting Adjutant were injured, but I think they will recover. Our battalion was relieved by the French, Moroccans, Three Hundred and Seventy-second soldiers and the First Battalion. During the drive we took three of the enemy's villages. I was Acting Liaison Sergeant during the drive of the Third Battalion Headquarters. My work was to send runners out to the different companies with messages from the Major to the Captain of the company.

During this open warfare quite a number of my men were gassed, injured and missing. Through the help of the Almighty God I was not injured very badly. The last sector that we were in was about 40 feet down in the earth, although we had lice to keep us company. We had to keep lights lit the whole time we were there.

Quite a number of times during the night we were visited by "Boche" shells. We had to have two sentries on every night at the doors of the "dugout" to notify the Commander if there was any gas thrown over by the enemy. Every morning before these sentries went off duty they would wake up the Sergeant Major for the morning reports of the four companies. After these reports had been brought in to the battalion they were consolidated into one and sent to the Regimental headquarters, as requested by the Colonel.

THE OPEN WARFARE.

On the morning of September 26, 1918, the open warfare started.
The One Hundred and Sixty-third and Moroccans advanced,
The Three Hundred and Sixty-ninth followed,
The going over the top, No Man's Land.
Through smoke, shots and shells some were gassed,
Some were injured and some were killed
By Boche's machine guns and artillery;
We still moved on through shots, smokes and shells,
Looking for Boche soldiers.

The Sun rose that morning shining bright on the battlefield, you know,
We still advanced over No Man's Land,
Capturing Boches as we go;
On that same day we did lie in one place
For safety from boche's machine gun shells.
Because if we moved you know what they would do
For our soldiers.
Captain Shaw said, "Let's take a chance and over to the other side go.
Because if we stay here we'll be shot up so bad by the enemy's shells."
So he led the way across the narrow bridgeway to the other side of
the stream.

A few of us followed, some were injured and some were not, on crossing the narrow stream;

We waded in water up to our knees, reaching the other side of the stream.

There we stayed until evening came, waiting for a chance to move.

After evening came we moved to the road.

We spent that night on the side of the hill;

The next morning came, we advanced over No Man's Land, you know, On that same day we came to our stopping place,

Which was called our objective.

But still we had faith in the Almighty above for landing us safely there. For He only knows what we know who have reached our objective.

We left for Les Menaux, France, the latter part of September, 1918. The night that we left it rained very hard. We went to Somme-Bonne and there spent about three or four days. Then we went to the trenches, starting on our open warfare drive. The weather was very fair and there was not much bombardment, but the machine guns were used very much by boches during the drive. We were hemmed in by boches. Our machine gun soldiers kept them from coming nearer to our position, the shallow trenches.

The officers who were with us were: Captain L'Esperance, Acting Major; Lieutenant Leland, Acting Adjutant. He was killed by a boche soldier. After the Acting Adjutant was shot the Acting Major took one of the private's gun and shot and killed the boche who killed the Acting Adjutant.

The Acting Major said: "Lord they have got Leland; Lord they have got Leland." Orderly Ellis for Captain Shaw was sent to deliver the message to the Commander of M Company to bring up his company as reenforcement to keep the enemy from capturing us. After Private Ellis had been gone for twenty minutes Captain Shaw sent me to deliver the message to Lieutenant Grams, Commanding Company M, to bring up his reinforcement. I started on my way. I saw Ellis lying down; so I asked him what was the matter. He told me he was dodging boche shells. I told him to get up and go with me, so he did. After we had started Ellis was shot through the knee and then he told me, "Foster, they got me." He crawled down to the embankment in the road for safety, then I tied his knee up with his leggin. Then I proceeded down the road because he said that his knee had become weak and he could not go any further, and he told me to have the stretcher bearer to come after him, but be careful and don't get shot.

I was successful in bringing M Company's men to the position where we were and kept our troops from being captured. That same day me moved farther down the trenches where we reached our next objective. There we spent the night.

I was sent from this objective to the Regimental Headquarters to take a message stating how many officers and men were killed and injured and also the number of men who were still alive. Colonel

Hayward said: "Our work is very good." That same night we were planning to go over the top behind the French.

We stayed there all night and the French soldiers dug in for the night. We dug in also. The next morning we went over the top of "Snake Hill." On this hill we lost very nearly a thousand men. This is where we got the name of our insignia "The Snake." This was the sixth day of the drive. We were on our way to a small town which the Germans were shelling. The French soldiers said that the American soldiers are good fighters but we are too fast.

I often wonder why they would not let us shoot. They said that we would give away our position and the enemy would know where we are. They also would not let us bombard cities because there was an agreement between the Germans and the Allies not to shell cities and towns where there were hospitals, women, children and prisoners of war. Germany broke this agreement and she had to suffer the consequence.

By us advancing so fast we got ahead of the French Artillery; then we had to retreat to "Snake Hill." After returning back to this hill we sent up several rockets, namely, red, white and green. But they did not pay any attention to it. During the same time we were relieved by the 372nd Regiment or "Red Hand Regiment" and the First Battalion of the "Rattle Snake" Regiment, better known as the "Hell Fighters." That same afternoon the men of these two regiments advanced and took the town we attempted to take. This was the next objective; at that same place a number of prisoners were captured and a plenty of ammunition, furniture and milk cows.

I went to the rear before this city was captured because I was gassed the fourth time. I went back for treatment, but I only got a ten days' rest and a few pills to take. After I came back from the rest camp I took up my duty with the Third Battalion Headquarters. They were stationed in a little village about four kilometers from the Regimental Headquarters. We left this place with the troops and hiked to the train. This was a twenty-mile hike. We left at night. We reached our destination the next morning at nine o'clock, and it was raining.

We took the train at this point and left about eleven o'clock that day. We traveled all the rest of the day and that night. We went through Chaumont where the American Headquarters are located. We stayed there ten minutes. The next morning at six o'clock we got off the train and marched through the fortified city of Belfort, which is something on the order of our American cities. We hiked about three kilometers out from this city to another town called Arrigny. The French people treated us very nice by giving us some of the sweetest apples that one would want to put in his mouth. They tasted just like sugar. After we left Arrigny we came to Meuse, France, in the trucks.

This was one of the best trips we had made up to this point. We went over the winding roads of the Alps near the Switzerland border. This region is called Alsace-Lorraine. This is the place where I heard a Rabbi preached on in New York City. His text was, "What Are We Fighting for?" His whole theme was on the Alsace-Lorraine

section of France, concerning the invasion of German soldiers in this part of France. He said that you mothers and fathers will have to send your sons to fight in this Great World's War for Democracy.

He spoke in Carnegie Hall, New York City. He ended his sermon with these words: "With Malice toward none and Charity for All." After we had stayed there one night, we left for the trenches with our Commanders the next morning around the winding roads of the Alps until we reached our P. C., which was called "Camp Amic." We were there ten days. I found this sector to be one of the best we have been in, because the "dugouts" are better. It is very cold up there, but it was a very healthy place.

Around the roads and through the woods
We steadily moved on up the Alps;
We passed fresh water and running streams
As we passed on up the winding Alps;

We saw small towns in the far distance
As we advanced,
We drank fresh water from the flowing springs
As we moved on up the winding Alps.

We saw green pines and beautiful flowers,
A few shells were thrown from Boche's Artillery;
They did echo in the far distance
As we moved on up the winding roads.

"A TOAST."

To our women who sent forth with courage in their hearts and tears
in their eyes.
To our women at home who are sacrificing their all that we may win;
To our women who are here, who give their own lives that we may live!
God bless them and damn the man who does not respect them,
And the coward who does not fight for them!

Finished is the first word I learned in French. On the morning of November 11th, 1918, the armistice was signed at eleven o'clock. The weather was very fair. The French people shouted for joy. A few days afterwards I could not believe that it was true, because the people in the Alsace-Lorraine section of the country had been under the German Government for forty years. But anyway I am glad that they are free. This part of France is very fertile. The farmers in this section of the country have plenty to eat around them. We were treated very royally by them, welcoming us into their homes, but some of us could not appreciate it because some of us would take things that did not belong to us.

It will be one of my greatest desires to visit France in the future, just to see how the French people are getting along. You see in this section the people wear wooden shoes and use steers to plow the ground. The German people wanted this part of France because it is very fertile; but as God should have it they did not get it from the

Alsatian people. These people are very peaceful, but they were compelled to fight against their will by the German Government. The Old Fighting Fifteenth, or 369th U. S. Infantry, was the first regiment to reach the Rhine and guard it. I had the pleasure of washing my face in it.

“THE RHINE.”

As we sat on the Rhine one Sunday morn
Watching the streams go by
We saw German towns in the far distance,
As we were watching the Rhine.

A beautiful scene as one would want to see,
That of watching the Rhine;
Two days and nights we watched the Rhine,
As the stream was flowing by.

We drank water out of the flowing Rhine
As we watched the streams go by,
Nature seemed to be in its splendor
As we sat watching the Rhine.

We built a big barnfire on its banks
While watching it.

If you could have been there, you would have enjoyed it too,
Watching it.

Three of us slept in one tent,
While we were watching it;
We had a number of dreams
When we went to sleep,
As we were watching it.

The searchlights were thrown upon the Rhine,
Searching for German soldiers,
While we were watching it;
We had about three kilometers to get our mess.
Some meals we had plenty, and some meals we did not,
As we were watching it.

Foster, Napper and Garrison slept in this one tent,
Watching it.

If you could have been there you would have enjoyed it too,
Sleeping on the banks of the Rhine.

During our stay in France since the war is over it has been said that the Third Battalion of the 369th U. S. Infantry has received an honor that no other battalion of this regiment has received from the French Government, which was called the “Legion of Honor.” I would like to say this: during our stay over here since the war is over we have had more stealing in this battalion than any other battalion of this regiment, all because the soldiers are not fed and paid.

There is one thing sure about the colored soldiers; if you want to get along with them, that is feed and pay them. That is the only way that stealing can be stopped; because if a man is hungry he will steal. That applies to any man, namely, white, black, brown, yellow and red. It is the sense of touch. During the time I was in the States before I came to France I happened to be in a restaurant. I saw a notice which read like this: "Think we have no preference, if overlooked in a minute; don't think you are misused, because no one is perfect. We try to do the best we can." I think if all races live up to that principle there will be no trouble about "you took my food and you did not deserve it, because you are not worth the salt that goes in your bread."

BE A WOMAN.

Is life beset with struggle?

Is life beset with grief?

Where shall we look for succor?

Where shall we find relief?

While some are always grumbling

Others do the best they can;

Why not strive to do your duty,

Be a woman.

If troubles come upon you

When you have done the best you can,

Do not whimper like a baby,

Be a woman.

Take heart, discouraged sister,

Your daily aim should be

That when your toils and cares shall end,

You live eternally.

I would like to say to all red blooded Americans of the United States that is this(during our stay in France after the Armistice and the peace terms had been signed there was a discussion come up about "draftees and enlisted men." What difference does it make when all of us are in the same man's army catching the same hell, bitten by the same kind of flees and lice, sleeping in the same trenches and dugouts during this World's War and some of us have been injured, killed and gassed by the same kind of shells which were shot by the enemy; because the enemy did not have no respective person in the World's War to shoot at.

We all got the same kind of rations and received the same kind of tobacco to smoke from the Red Cross Society, drank water from the same streams, fought side by side in the same Army. The only difference I see is just in name—one is National Army, U. S. A., and the other National Guard, U. S. A. We attended the same Y. M. C. A., heard the same Chaplain preach, drank cocoa from the same place and bought cake from the same Y. M. C. A.; received pay from the same paymaster of the U. S. A. and prayed prayers in the same

U. S. A.; used profane language in the same army and fought under the same flags, namely, U. S. A. and French. God, who is the righteous judge of the whole situation and who had His Son to die on the cross that the world might be saved from its sins, because He had no respect for persons and of which God said that is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. If anyone can tell me the difference I would like to know. You might as well to own up to it because there is no difference. We all are striving for the same goal. Let us work together as we never have worked before, because where there is unity there is strength, for divided we fall, together we stand. Your God shall be my God, your people my people in whom I'll trust.

P. S.—Don't misunderstand me about stealing. Some men are born to steal from their mother's womb, but the majority of the soldiers will not steal unless they are hungry and are not paid.

¶ Forty years for what? Forty years to rule the world in commerce and Christianity. I would call this great World's War a football game which was played between the Allies and Germany. The game was called four years ago. Germany kicked off to the Allies, the Allies received the ball. They fumbled it then "Boch" got it and made their drive with which they were successful in gaining Belgium. They started into France. They were checked by France, although this was one touchdown for them.

Then Germany made several touchdowns in France. Finally France got the ball by Germany losing it and she gained territory but did not make many touchdowns. On July 14, 1918, Germany kicked off again to France. After France had received the ball she made another touchdown and drove the Germans back twelve miles off their territory by injuring, killing and capturing many soldiers.

¶ On September 26, 1918, France kicked off to Germany. This was the last half of the game, which would decide who would be the victors of the "World's War" football game. Germany received the ball, started out with it and fumbled the ball. Then France got it and carried it over the Alsatian goal, which was the final touchdown for the World's Series of the World's War Football Games, which caused the signing of the Armistice and the peace terms. *etc*

Hindenburg was captain of Germany's team and Foch was captain of the French team. General Pershing and the Kaiser were referees for the game.

Hindenburg had a great line on the Western Front. It was said that it could not be broken, but the Allies broke it and made the final touchdown which ended the World's War Series. I have studied the Bible and have attended Sunday School, and have seen pictures of this country; but I would like to say that this war is the fulfillment of the Bible. *etc*

With a laugh in your heart
 And a smile in your face
 Stand up in the world and stick to your place;
 Don't let grim mischances
 Triumph over you,
 Don't think of stopping, whatever you do.

Keep busy, keep cheerful,
Be constant and true,
And fortune nonplussed
Will surrender to you.
And in the conclusion
My motto is: What man has done
Man will do, I'll try.

In the drive which started September 26, 1918, and lasted through October our regiment, the 369th U. S. Infantry, formerly the Old Fighting Fifteenth of New York, colored, took what was known as "Snake Hill." The French soldiers were not able to take that hill in the last four years of the bloodiest wars in history. We took it for them, although we lost very nearly a thousand men in doing so.

The French soldiers called us the "Hell Fighters." They also gave us our insignia, which is the snake on the uniforms we wear. The whole regiment was cited for bravery and every soldier in the regiment is to receive a Croix de Guerre; whether he has received it or not all of them are due to receive it, etc.

In geometry we have a problem which reads like this: The shortest distance between two points is a straight line. But in this New Revised Edition will read like this: The longest distance between two points is a crooked line. In France they have many straight roads and quite a number of crooked roads. The 369th U. S. Infantry hiked over a number of crooked roads.

I believe we have hiked all over the Northern part of France. The men of the United States Army, whether you be white, brown, black, yellow or red and if you are a citizen of the Northern, Eastern, Southern or Western States, "Make good where you are." In this modern history of which some writer in the United States will write, if it has not already been written, children who are unborn will know about the Kaiser. He held the whole world at attention for four years, then Hindenburg said parade rest.

I would like to say to the French people, please fortify the Rhine River as soon as possible, in order that the Armistice and the peace terms will be everlasting.

GABIANS AND FASCINES.

By Obadiah M. Foster, Acting Liaison Sergeant.

As we sat in the office one day
Talking about gabians and fascines,
I heard someone speak about Gabians and Fascines.

One of my comrades could not pronounce the names
Of gabians and fascines;
I heard someone speak about
Gabians and Fascines
At Camp Sherman, you know,
But two of the greatest things that were used in the war
Were gabians and fascines.

A man can't be a good soldier
 Unless he knows gabians and fascines;
 There are plenty of men in the army
 Who don't know gabians and fascines.

But I would like to say to anyone
 Who can't pronounce the names of Gabians and Fascines,
 Make it your business from now on
 To know gabians and fascines.

THE "JAZZ KING."

By Obadiah M. Foster.

Lieutenant Jim Europe, the "Jazz King."
 The whole world knows it.
 It is his jazz in all the magazines and papers you read,
 Because he wrote it.

He is the man who put "M" in music,
 I am sure you all will not doubt it;
 The greatest jazzer since there has been jazz in music,
 Ever since he came from Europe.

When we marched up Fifth Avenue
 Everyone who witnessed it.
 That is was Lieutenant Jim Reese Europe's "Jazz"
 That made us strut our stuff.

Someone said why don't you all smile,
 You all look so sincere;
 But when Jim's Band played we smiled and danced a jig.
 Because it was the pep and ginger that he put into his music
 That caused us to have success.

Heaven claims his soul,
 He rests in peace in Arlington Cemetery,
 Where he will worry no more.

Let his name and good works live on forever,
 Because he has won fame that no other musician has won,
 That caused us to have success.

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